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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/05/2019

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SUBJECT: CANADA DECLINES UIGHUR DETAINEES

REF: A. OTTAWA 374

[1](#)B. OTTAWA 313

Classified By: PolMinCouns Scott Bellard, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

[1](#)1. (U) Prime Minister Stephen Harper's spokesman Kory Teneycke on June 4 confirmed to the media that Canada had declined requests from the Obama and Bush Administrations to take any Uighur detainees from Guantanamo Bay, noting "given that these detainees have no link with Canada...I do not see our policy changing. I don't see us taking any detainees from Guantanamo." He underscored that "in the cases of the Uighurs and other Guantanamo Bay detainees, Canada has no interest." When asked about a possible effect on U.S.-Canadian relations, he added that "I anticipate that the relationship will be unaffected by this."

[1](#)2. (C) The Prime Minister's principal secretary Ray Novak had informed CDA late on June 3 about this decision and the planned announcement. He indicated that the government's earlier decisions not to seek the repatriation of Canadian detainee Omar Khadr -- despite an April 23 Federal court decision ordering the government to do just that (ref b), which the government has now appealed -- would make it politically impossible now to accept the Uighurs.

[1](#)3. (C) Assistant to the Cabinet for Foreign and Defence Policy Gordon Venner confirmed to PolMinCouns on June 5 that this decision was final and that Embassy could so inform Special Envoy Fried (ref a). He admitted puzzlement about the timing and reason for the public announcement, and indicated that the Prime Minister's Office had essentially pre-empted both the Privy Council Office and the Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade in reaching this decision. He noted his understanding that this policy decision would also apply to the three Uighurs seeking refugee status in Canada.

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